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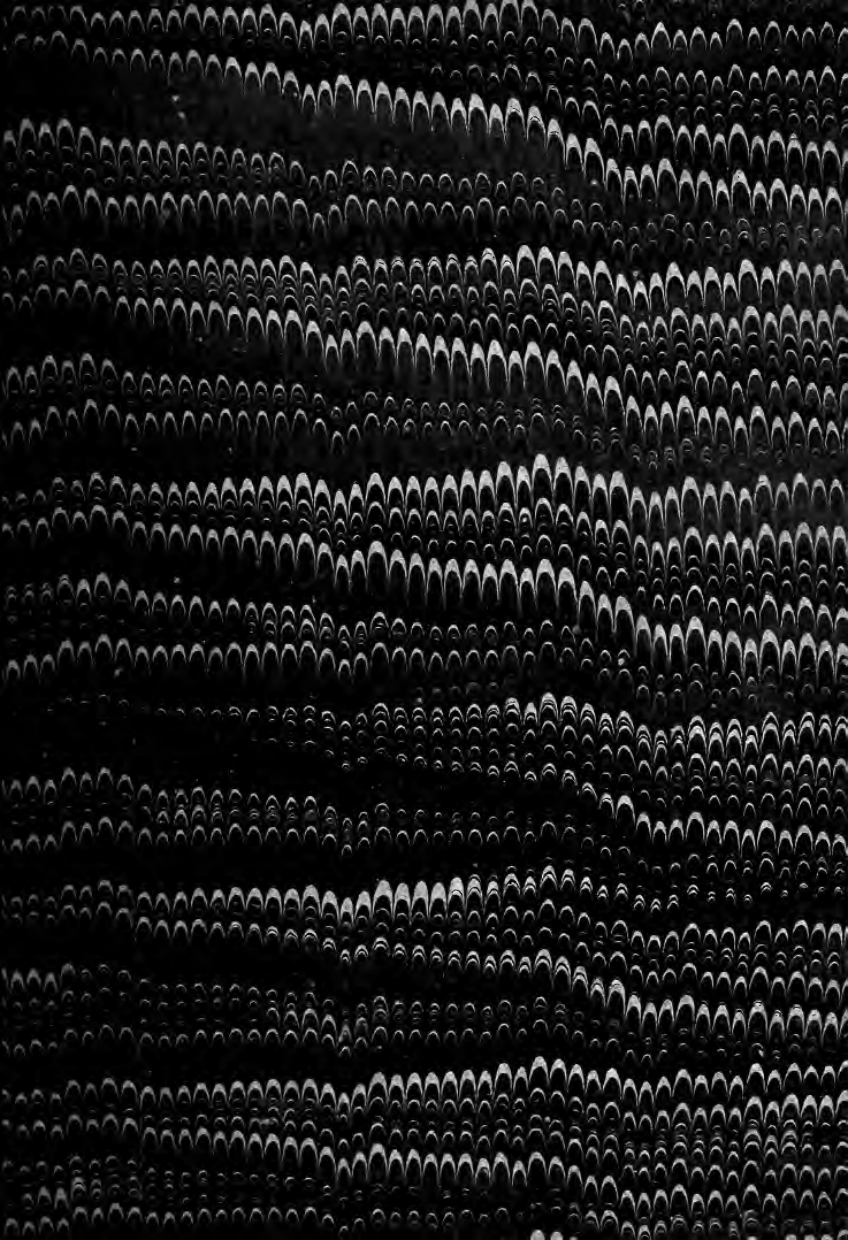
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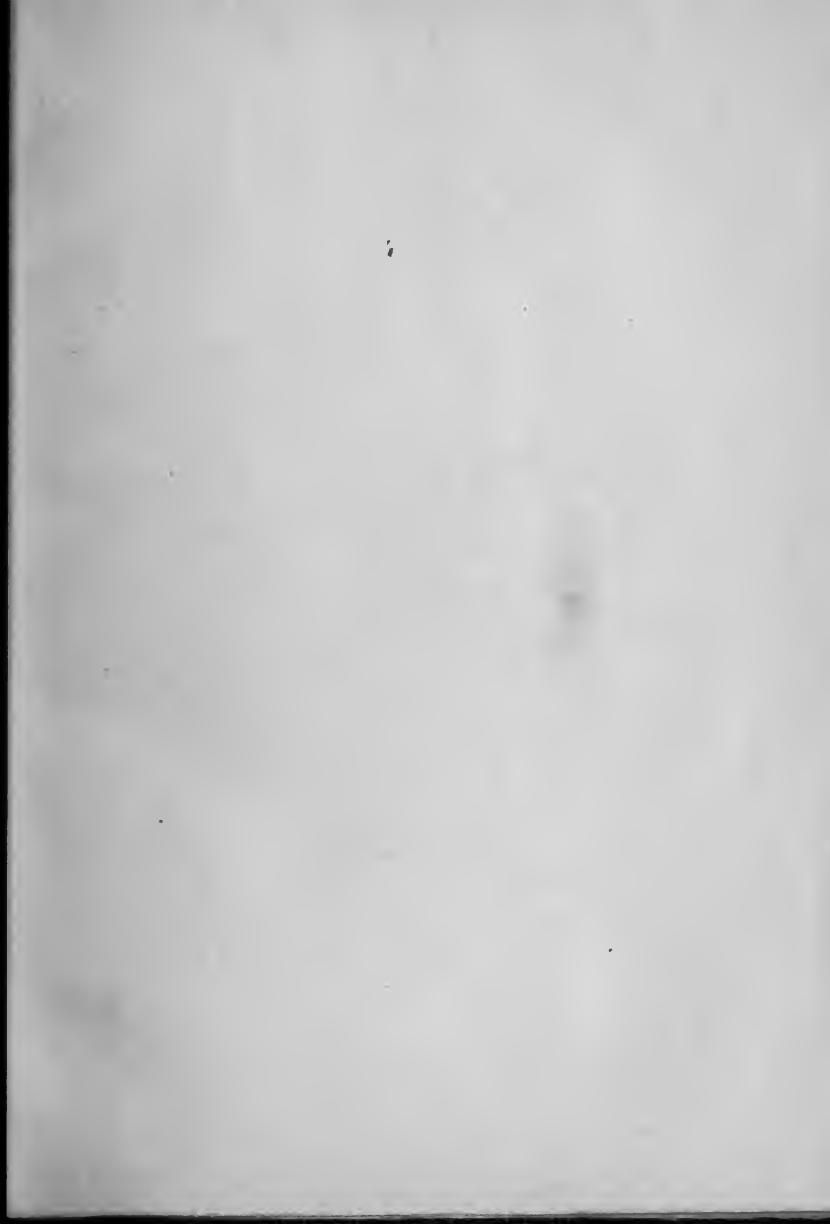
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

















EXCLUSIVE IMMERSION:

ITS ERRORS

—AND—

Its Logical Consequences;

✓ —BY—

REV. I. LINEBARGER, A. M.,

OF THE ROCK RIVER CONFERENCE.

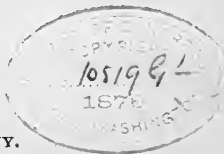
Ye do Err, Not Knowing the Scriptures.—*Math. 22, 29.*

MULTUM IN PARVO.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

The title page fully explains the import of this treatise. Its sole purpose is to uproot and destroy the errors and traditions of men and promote the truth as it is in Jesus.

It is presented in a cheap and popular form that it may reach multitudes, who have neither time to read, nor means to purchase larger and more expensive works. The first chapter embodies many clear, concise and Scriptural proofs of several propositions, which directly oppose and totally subvert several errors of exclusive immersion.

The second chapter contains an elaborate and complete Discourse, showing still further, the utter fallacy, superstitious history, leading causes and shocking consequences, of exclusive immersion.

In short, "things new and old" are compressed in these pages, and it is humbly believed, that the truth is so clearly and forcibly stated and illustrated that it will expel error as light dispels darkness. "With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmnes

in the right as God gives us to see the right," I lay this unpretentious tribute at the Master's feet, fervently praying, that many a precious soul, perplexed and in doubt as to the true mode of Christian Baptism, may be led, by its pages, out of the erring complex ways of men, into "Heaven's easy, artless, *unencumbered Plan.*"

I. L.

Dixon, Ills., July 24th, 1876.

TESTIMONIAL.

JUNE 30, 1876.

REV. AND DEAR SIR:

With much interest, and no little profit, I have read your manuscript on "Exclusive Immersion, its Errors and Its Logical Consequences." Without intending to flatter the author, I must be permitted to say that, as an argument, it is doubtless the best, the clearest, and within the same compass the most complete, I have ever met with on that subject. You have fairly exposed the fallacy of anabaptist reasoning, and shown that most bigoted and most mischievous of modern heresies to be utterly baseless and indefensible. The logic of your pamphlet is sound; its language, clear and concise; its spirit, kind, courteous, and charitable. While sectarian controversy is generally to be deprecated as the bane of true religion, every lover of Christian Truth must rejoice in so seasonable a production, and some probably will even find cause to thank God for the occasion which called it forth. No honest mind can read it without conviction; and its publication ought to be productive of Christian Modesty and Christian Charity in those whose error it so gently yet so faithfully rebukes. I remain

Yours in Christ Jesus,

J. CROSS.

To the Rev. Isaac Linebarger, A. M.

NOTE BY THE AUTHOR:—The above testimonial of the Rev. Joseph Cross, *D. D., LL. D.*, the present learned and able Rector of the Episcopal Church of Dixon, Ills., is the more valuable from the fact, that he has traveled extensively in the East, and declares, in common with Prof. Robinson and other travelers, that “the baptismal fonts, still found among the ruins of the most ancient Greek Churches and going back, apparently, to very early times, are not large enough to admit of the baptism of adult persons by immersion, and were obviously never intended for that use.” Dr. Cross says that those of the largest capacity will not contain a depth of water of more than ten inches.

It is known, too, that all the ancient pictures, of which many have been preserved to the present day, represent both parties as standing in the font, whilst the administrator sprinkled or poured water from a vessel upon the head of the candidate, and thus the baptism was administered in a Scriptural way, by applying the element to the person.

No doubt, Christ was baptized in this way, whilst standing in Jordan, as all the ancient pictures, dating back to the third century and some of them even earlier, unanimously portray.

The idea, that John took hold of Christ's person and plunged under water the sacred body of Him "whose shoe's-latchet he was not worthy to unloose," is revolting to the mind and not taught in the New Testament.

I. L.



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CHAPTER I.

But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine.—*Titus 2, 1.*

Our text enjoins a duty, which is incumbent on every public servant of God. Every minister of Christ "is set for the defense of the Gospel" and for the maintenance "of sound doctrine." The soundness or unsoundness of any doctrine must be finally tested and decided by an appeal "to the law and the testimony." If it abides this test, let it stand; if not, let it fall. It is by this test that we have thoroughly and prayerfully examined the "doctrine of Baptisms," and are prepared to prove the following points: *That John's baptism was not a Christian baptism, but differed from it in six important particulars.*

1. It has a distinctive name. Inspiration calls it "John's Baptism." The Bible names things as *they are*, and if this had been Christian baptism, it would never have been named "John's baptism."—*Acts 19, 3.*

2. The nature of John's baptism totally distinguishes it from Christian baptism. The prerequisite of the former, was repentance and the confession of sin:

the prerequisite of the latter, is a justified and saved state.

3. They differ as to the *time* of their institution. Christian baptism was not instituted until Christ commissioned his apostles to go, teach and baptize all nations, which took place three years and six months after "*John did baptize in the wilderness.*"

4. John required of his disciples, in order to their baptism, faith in a Messiah to come. Christian baptism requires faith in the reality and death of an already crucified and risen Savior.

5. Christian baptism imports faith in the Holy Trinity. John made no such requisition.

6. The apostles paid no regard to John's baptism, but rebaptized his disciples, a circumstance that never would have happened, had John's baptism been Christian baptism. The thousands on the day of Pentecost had doubtless, for the most part, been previously baptized by John as well as the twelve of John's disciples whom Paul found at Ephesus, Acts 19, 1-12, and yet the apostles administered to them all Christian baptism, plainly proving that they regarded John's baptism as only a Jewish mode of purification, and not a Christian baptism.

The fact is, John belonged to the Old Testament. He was the last and greatest of the prophets of the

Mosaic dispensation, but he that is least in the Christian kingdom of God is greater than he. The Levitical ritual terminated not in John, but in Christ. Had John immersed the people, he would have contradicted the uniform practice of symbolical purification in vogue for fifteen hundred years, and the Jews would have asked: By what authority doest thou practice this mode? John, no doubt, baptized the people as Moses did, when "he took the blood of calves and of goats with water and scarlet wool and hyssop and sprinkled both the book and all the people." —*Heb. 9, 19.*

Indeed, the positions of Moses and John, were quite similar. Moses introduced Joshua, the leader, into the promised earthly Canaan. John introduced Christ, the leader, into the promised heavenly Canaan.

Both adopted and practiced the same mode of purification. With all these plain and evident facts before us, how great and glaring the error appears, which teaches the identity of John's baptism with Christian baptism: The second point to prove is this: *That the baptism of Christ partook neither of the character of John's baptism nor of the nature of Christian baptism.*

1. John's baptism implied repentance, but Christ knew no sin and needed no repentance.

2. It implied, also, faith in a Messiah to come, which would have been absurd in the case of Christ.

3. Neither did Christ's baptism partake of the nature of Christian baptism, for Christian baptism was not instituted till after his resurrection, and is performed in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, which would have been irrelevant and trifling in the case of Christ.

4. The import of Christian baptism, as a sign and seal, is totally inapplicable to the person and character of him "who was holy, harmless and undefiled, separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens."

It is here, again, that exclusive immersion involves itself in great and palpable error.

It not only affirms the identity of John's baptism with Christian baptism, but declares that Christ himself received the ordinance of Christian baptism as an example for his followers. The skillful use of this spurious reasoning has, perhaps, gained more adherents to this false doctrine than any other method. In times of revival, it is especially brought to bear on the tender feelings of young converts, and they are exhorted to "go down the banks of Jordan," that is, be immersed in obedience to Christ's example.

No form of teaching could be more untrue and unscriptural.

It has neither truth nor fact to support it. It finds its parallel alone in that "wind of doctrine" with which the hearts of the simple were tossed to and fro and deceived by the sleight of men in the days of the apostles.

There are three facts, that demonstrate beyond the possibility of a doubt, that Christ never intended his baptism to be an example for his followers, in any particular.

1. He makes no reference whatever to the event in any of his subsequent teachings. There is no command, nor allusion anywhere in the New Testament, implying that his example is to be imitated in this respect. The authority of his word and not his example, obligate his people to confess him in baptism.

2. Christ gave us no example of celebrating the Lord's Supper.

He said: "drink ye," &c., but he himself did not partake of the sacramental elements. Why should he set us an example in one sacrament and omit it in the other. If the power of his example was needed in one instance, it was equally needful in the other. The same divine authoritative word, that commands us to be baptized, also commands us to show the Lord's death till he come, and his exam-

ple in either case would have been unnecessary and out of place.

3. His example, in this regard, would be essentially defective and unsafe to follow. Although "the grace of God was upon him" from a child, he deferred his baptism till the age of manhood. Shall pious youth wait till they are thirty years old before they publicly avow Christ in baptism?

Christ, also, waited "till all the people were baptized," (Luke 3, 21), before he submitted to the ceremony.

As their exemplar, ought he not to have preceded rather than have followed the people? He set an example of *procrastination* in this particular. All this plea for exclusive immersion by an appeal to the baptism of Christ is as false and baseless as it is possible for error to be.

It is an association of things found only in the erring imagination of men. The very nature of Christ's baptism forbids the possibility of its imitation. No man ever did or can follow Christ in this particular. The circumcision of Christ at the age of eight days is just as much of an example to his friends as his baptism at the age of thirty years.

Why was Christ circumcised or baptized at all? It was wholly for the purpose of obedience to the

Mosaic economy, to which he, as a Jew and a son of David, belonged. He was "made under the law," and respect for "the law given by Moses" required full conformity to its entire ritual. That law required that every priest should be formally consecrated to his work, by the holy anointing at the age of thirty years, (Lev. 8 chap., Ex. 29 chap.) At the age of thirty, Christ came forth to enter on his public work as a "merciful and faithful high priest to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."

He needed a formal consecration to this work and to whom should he go but unto John, the bold and rugged priest and prophet of the wilderness. When "John forbade him" Christ removed his conscientious scruples by referring him to the still existing and binding obligation of the Mosaic ritual; "suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." In these words of Christ we find the only reason, that rendered his baptism at all fitting or necessary.

It was his public and official installation into the functions of the high priesthood, as was required of him who came to fulfill all righteousness, that is, to fulfill every statute and requirement of the Mosaic ritual.

As God's high priest, "consecrated for evermore," he cleansed the temple; and when questioned as to his

authority, he appealed to the baptism of John, as a sufficient vindication of his authority, plainly showing that he considered his baptism nothing more nor less than a priestly consecration to that work. (Math. 21, 12. 23-27.)

Another point I wish to prove is: *that nothing whatever can be inferred as to the mode of baptism* from the use of the Greek prepositions *en, eis, ek* and *apo*. A glance at the different expressions employed by the Evangelists will prove this point. Math. 3. 6, says: they were baptized of him in Jordan. Mark 1. 4, says: John did baptize in the wilderness. In Luke 3, 3, the same fact is stated differently: He came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance. John 3, 23, states the same thing in another way: John also was baptizing in Enon, near to Salim.

Language so various and general, was never intended to teach the precise mode of baptizing. It refers only and exclusively to the place, the *region*, where John exercised his ministry.

John baptized both in the wilderness and at Enon; and it is just as reasonable to infer that he plunged the people under the sands of the wilderness, or under the streets of Enon, as to infer, because he baptized at Jordan, that therefore he must have plunged the multitudes under water. The great error of exclusive

immersion consists in inferring a mode of baptism from certain scriptures, which were only intended to point out the locality where baptism was administered.

Thus this error, here as in all other cases, "wrests" Scripture from its intended use and perverts and misleads the uninformed.

There are three facts invariably connected with the administration of baptism at any time or place:

1. A coming to the place of baptism.
2. The act of baptism.
3. The going away from the place of baptism.

The act of baptism is intermediate between the other two facts, one of which precedes and the other follows. The going to or "into" and departing away from or "out of" the water, have nothing more to do with the mode of baptism than the driving a horse "into and out of" the water has anything to do with the mode of his drinking. A horse drinks in the same way, whether watered in the stable or at a well or river, so baptism was always administered in the same way, by the application of water to a person, whether the place was a wilderness, a jail, a house or a river.

According to Winer's Greek Idioms, *eis* and *apo*, when used in connection with verbs that denote motion, as in the cases of the baptism of Christ and the

Eunuch, always have the primary meaning of going to and away from a place.

Nothing, therefore, can be more erroneous than to infer the mode of baptism from prepositions, only used to designate locality. The fallacy is apparent to every reflecting mind.

Another point I wish to make is: that *quality* and not *quantity* of water induced John to move from Bethabara to Enon. There was *more* water at Bethabara than at Enon, for it is 25 miles nearer the mouth of Jordan. As the hot season approached, John knew that the health and comfort of the vast multitudes that came to his ministry, demanded a better quality of water and he left Bethabara and came to Enon, a place of "much water," or of many waters, as the Greek expresses it, for the place was called Enon, because of its many fountains and streams of pure, living water. When an encampment, either for military or religious purposes, is located at the present day, the first reference is always paid to the quality rather than to the quantity of water. Such was the motive that directed John's course from Bethabara to Enon.

Another point of interest is: that all the facts connected with the eunuch's baptism, prove that he could not have been immersed and must have been bap-

tized in a different way. There are three arguments that establish this point.

1. The place forbids the supposition of an immersion. It was on the "way that goeth down from Jerusalem, unto Gaza, which is *desert*." (Acts 8, 26.)

The sight of water at all in this "desert" was evidently a surprise as the exclamatory language of the eunuch implies: "*See, water.*"

2. The quantity of the water was inadequate for the purpose of an immersion.

"They came unto "a certain water" (Acts 8. 36). The *ti* translated "certain" is used in a diminutive sense and means *some, any, or a little* water. It was in this "desert" that the herdsmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdsmen, saying: The water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek or *contention*; because they strove with him." (Gen. 26, 20.) It was here the Philistines stopped up the wells after the death of Abraham, and Isaac's servants digged and found a well of springing water. It was, no doubt, such a well or watering-place for travelers, before which the eunuch "commanded the chariot to stand still."

Both Philip and the eunuch alighted from the chariot and went to the water. Philip baptized him, and the eunuch went on his way rejoicing, and the spirit of the Lord caught away Philip. Philip was im-

mersed just as much as the eunuch, for both went into the water, and both came up out of the water, positively proving that the prepositions "into and out of," have nothing to do with the mode of the eunuch's baptism. "And he baptized him," or the act of baptism took place after they went to or "into" the water, and before they came away from or "out" of the water, as must take place in all baptisms, whatsoever the mode. The prepositions only show that the baptism was administered where there was water, but indicates nothing as to the quantity of water, or the mode of baptism.

3. "The place of the Scripture which he read" and Philip expounded, proves that an immersion was not only improbable, but even *unthinkable*.

Philip was explaining to him the prophesy of Isaiah concerning Him who was to "sprinkle many nations," Isaiah 52,15. The "man of Ethiopia heard the word and believed with all his heart and desired to be baptized, as an outward sign and profession of his saving faith in the Son of God." He was a representative of the "many nations" whom the Messiah should sprinkle and purify. Philip preached the doctrine of sprinkling to him but said nothing about an immersion. Thus the "desert place, the scarcity of water, and the Scripture read and explained, conclusively prove that the Eunuch's baptism must have been by affusion.

Another proposition amply sustained by Scripture is: that *baptizo* in connection with the ordinance of baptism, never means to dip, plunge or immerse, but always to *purify*. It does not even mean to sprinkle or pour, but its *one* and *invariable* meaning is, to *purify*. There is abundant and satisfactory proof of this *vital point* in this discussion.

4. Prof. Edward Robinson's Greek Lexicon is regarded by scholars of all denominations as *the* acknowledged standard authority for every Greek word of the New Testament and, in *no* case does he give dip, plunge, or immerse as a meaning of *baptizo* in the New Testament. Neither does *baptizo* bear the exclusive meaning of dip, plunge or immerse in Classic Greek, as the Rev. Dr. Dale has proven by almost innumerable citations in his learned volume on Classic Baptism. But one might as well expect to find the doctrines of Christ or of Paul in the writings of Aristotle or Plato, as to find the New Testament meaning of a Greek word in Pagan or Classical authors. The rich, mellow apple of a well-cultivated orchard is very different in its appearance and quality from the hard crab-apple that once grew wild in the forests of the Old World. Yet it is the *same* apple transplanted, improved and ennobled. So, also, the sacred *baptizo* of the New Testament is quite different in its meaning from the pagan baptizo of heathen-

ism. Christianity infused a new meaning into many old words, and coined many new words to express its manifold divine ideas. The new wine demanded new bottles. *Ekklesia* or Church in heathen writers, meant exclusively an assembly of citizens for municipal or secular purposes, but in the New Testament it means a community of believers separated from the world and devoted to the service of God.

Deipnon, or supper, always in classic Greek meant a feast, a sumptuous repast, but its religious or ritual meaning is now expressed in the use of a morsel of bread or a sip of wine in the Lord's Supper.

Baptizo, also, has but one *invariable, uniform* meaning in the baptismal rite. It is the technical word used by the Holy Ghost to express the meaning of the purifying rites and ceremonies of both the Old and New Testaments. It appropriates and embodies in itself the "divers baptisms" of the Old Testament and designates in the sacrament of baptism the effect of the application of water to a person. It always means to purify, no more, no less. The ritual effect of the word defines and explains its meaning. To baptize and to purify in Hebrew and Scripture phraseology mean precisely the same thing. The two words are perfectly synonymous. The baptism of water is a ritual purification; the baptism of the Spirit is a real purification. The former symbolizes the lat-

ter. The Scriptures never predict that the Messiah would immerse, but always that he would purify.

The uniform and expressive language of prophecy is, that He would sit as a refiner and purifier of silver and so thorough and sifting would be his purifying agency that few would be able to abide the day of his coming. The Jews hastened to the ministry of John, musing in their hearts whether or not he was the Christ, the great and predicted purifier, and their spontaneous inquiry was: why baptizest or purifiest thou, then, if thou art not the Christ? John 1:25.

I, answered John, baptize or purify you with water but He shall baptize or purify you with the Holy Ghost.

A question arose between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying, and was decided by an appeal to baptism, manifestly proving that purifying and baptizing have precisely the same meaning in Biblical usage (John 3:25, 26).

The washing of tables (or the baptism of couches or beds, as it stands in the original) of which we read in Mark 7:4 was nothing more nor less than a ceremonial purification of those things, lest an unclean person should have sat down upon them.

The tables or couches mentioned were longer and wider than our sofas or lounges and it was the religious custom of the Jews to baptize or purify them as

often as they washed their cups, pots and brazen vessels. The immersion of such huge pieces of furniture three times a day is totally incredible, and there was nothing in the manner of the purifying of the Jews that required it. They were baptized or purified by sprinkling or affusion as Dean Alford and Dr. Whedon both state in their comments. By thus "comparing spiritual things with spiritual" the Bible interprets the meaning of its own terms and declares a verdict from which there can be no appeal.

The unsettled elements of this tedious controversy are thus allayed by the breath of the Almighty and the right of appeal is abolished forever by the divine authority of the word of God. The churches of the Redeemer will ultimately be obliged to accede to this position without a dissenting voice, and here may they rest, not only emblematically purified with water, but baptized or rather purified and refined with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

Baptizing and purifying express not the external mode of an action but its blessed effect. Mode and effect are as distinct as the fruit and the vegetable processes by which the fruit is produced. A command to baptize or purify leaves the mode of baptizing or purifying optional with the individual.

In Christ's great commission to baptize all nations, he commands the production of a definite effect, re-

ardless of the mode of symbolizing or securing that effect.

The words of the commission are all generic and not specific and command the church to go, *preach, baptize and teach*, without regard to the mode of going, preaching, baptizing and teaching. As there are different ways of going, such as walking, or riding by land or water; or different ways of teaching, as, for instance, by conversation or example, a tract or an object-lesson, so there are different modes of baptizing or purifying and all these external methods are to be left entirely to the option of the individual and to circumstances. Christ ordained means for the accomplishment of a required result and wisely left the external mode of using and applying those means to the free and intelligent choice of his faithful followers. Every institution of the Gospel is a means to an end. Preaching is the use of speech for the evangelization of men, and consists of sermons, exhortations, homilies or expository lectures. All these forms of speech are only different modes of preaching. They grow out of the *generic* command to "preach the Gospel to every creature." To fasten preaching down to any cast-iron set mode of speech would be as much out of place as to arrest the angel whom John "saw fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach," and drag him down from the sky and harness

him with a draught-horse to a load of earth. It is just so with the command to baptize, which Christ uttered in the same connection. It is a *generic word*, comprehensive in its meaning, and allows the adoption of any method that will facilitate the purpose of the Gospel and any attempt to tie it down to the signification of a mere external mode is a clog, a *dead weight*, that hampers the progress of the truth as it is in Jesus. There is much more Scripture authority for insisting upon a set and stereotyped form of prayer, than there is for insisting upon a fixed, *undeviating* mode of baptism. Christ did say: "After this manner, therefore, pray ye." But he never said, after this manner baptize ye. He taught us *how* to pray, but he never taught us *how* to be baptized. Had the *mode* been necessary, a word from him would have settled this question forever. No such word was ever uttered, and the legitimate presumption is that he considered the external mode as indifferent and not essential. If the form of prayer he gave us, allows the greatest variety of expression in making our requests known unto God, much more shall we be allowed the utmost liberty of choice as to the mode by which we shall dedicate ourselves to God in baptism. It is my settled and godly conviction that the preceding points and propositions are all warranted by the Word of God, and will commend themselves to the considerate and unprejudiced judgment of all persons. These things become sound doctrine.

CHAPTER II.

Prove all things ; hold fast that which is good.—1 *Thes.* 5 : 21.

Our subject this evening is the error or *the unscriptural assumption of exclusive immersion and its logical consequences.*

It is claimed that there can be no baptism without immersion. This circumstance is made absolutely essential to the validity of the ordinance. It is assumed without the shadow of a proof, that John plunged the millions *one by one* that came to his baptism, of scarcely eight months duration; it is assumed that Christ was immersed, and that the thousands of the Jerusalem Church were immersed, notwithstanding the scarcity of water and the impracticability of the undertaking. In every instance, exclusive immersion assumes and asserts a thing that is utterly incapable of proof. Like every other *error* or *heresy* of mankind, it rests upon assumption, and nothing but assumption. Even the gigantic imposition of Catholicism is based upon nothing but the bold and daring assumptions of the order of Jesuits. It is exactly so with exclusive immersion. It has nothing what-

ever either in scripture, reason, or history to rest upon but the bold and unwarranted assumptions of its interested advocates.

It is our purpose to examine and disprove this sweeping and erroneous assumption and to show that an immersion is not essential to Christian baptism. We all know that the word *immerse* is not found in the English Bible. Neither is the word from whence it is derived, found in any edition of the Greek or Latin Testaments.

Immerse is a word derived from the Latin *immergere* and means to dip, plunge, to stick into anything, to immerse, a word not even found in the Latin Testament. The *reason is obvious*. The learned translators of the Greek Testament into the Latin language, in the second century, knew that there was not a thing in the Christian religion that could be symbolized or expressed by an *immersion*, and hence they had no use for a word of such narrow and limited meaning and application. They knew that the whole ritual of the Old and New Testaments, would be fulfilled to the letter without the immersion of a single person.

If immerse and baptize were terms of equivalent import, they would be convertible, and the one would have been freely interchanged with the other in the translation of the Greek Testament into Latin and

English. In no instance, however, is this the case. *Baptizo* is always used, and was first transferred from the Greek into the Latin and then into the English Testament, plainly proving that, in the godly judgment of the learned divines all through the centuries, its meaning could not be expressed by *immergo*, or *immerse* or any kindred word.

In their view, *immerse* had never been "sanctified by the word of God and prayer." It belonged to heathen and secular life, and found no place in the sacred vocabulary of revealed religion.

"Baptism, according to Webster, is the application of water to a person, as a sacrament or religious ceremony." I have never yet been able to comprehend how an immersion can express the application of water to a person. Philip baptized the eunuch, that is, applied water, to his person. John baptized with water, that is, used water as the instrument or means and applied it to the people. God baptizes with the Holy Ghost, that is, applies the Spirit to man and not man to the Spirit. The element in every case is active and the subject is passive. But in the case of an immersion this order is reversed, and the candidate is active and the element is passive. He wades into the water, and being usually requested to hold his breath, his head and shoulders are dipped under water. In every step of this process, the candidate is applied to

the element, and not the element to the candidate, and, strictly speaking, the element is baptized, and not the person, for the active always baptizes the passive. We define our position as follows: In the absence of any *explicit divine* command as to just *how* a person should be baptized, we conclude that God has wisely left this as well as all similar external matters to the option of the individual and to circumstances. The *thing* is what God requires, not the *mode*. The baptism is equally acceptable to *Him* whether it be performed by sprinkling, pouring, *or by a single* or trine immersion. The mode is a matter absolutely indifferent and non-essential. If, however, the Scriptures do authorize one mode above another, we affirm, it gives the preference in all cases to sprinkling or pouring. As the photograph resembles the original, as the shadow outlines the substance, as the picture portrays the landscape, as the *sign represents* the *thing signified*, so the water baptism should always symbolize the Spirit baptism. The mode of the one should correspond to the mode of the other. As the Spirit always *descends, falls upon* and is *poured out* on the subject, the inference is *irresistible*, that such should be the mode of water baptism. We will not, however, insist upon this, but shall allow all others the same liberty of thought that we claim for ourselves. If all parties would acquiesce in this reason-

able and Scriptural principle, the discussion of this subject would terminate forever. But when persons arise and boldly declare that there is one and *only* one mode of baptism and that this mode is the *Alpha and Omega* of the ordinance, and unless you are submerged by a minister of the would-be regular Baptist succession, you have not received Christian baptism and have no *Scripture warrant* to be *called a Christian Church*; we pause and inquire by *what authority* this *boastful avowal* is made. Then it is, that discussion becomes *inevitable*. And in the language of Patrick Henry, I say, *let it come*, and may God adjudge the responsibility where it belongs. It is a great gain, in the discussion of any subject, to be able to trace out the history of the error combatted. Human nature has ever been prone to corrupt the institutions of God. Even the Church at Corinth in the days of the Apostle Paul, converted the sacrament of the Lord's Supper into a scene of feasting and disorder.

And even to the present time this beautiful and impressive sacrament is encumbered and corrupted by the monstrous and revolting error of transubstantiation. Much more would the simple rite of baptism be corrupted by many inventions of men after the death of the apostles. An error once started goes of itself. It accelerates its progress like a stone rolling

down hill. Such is the history of immersion, and centuries afterwards, of exclusive immersion. Immersion began its existence in the Christian Church in the latter part of the second century, almost one hundred years after the death of the last apostle. It was introduced in company with several other superstitious practices, such as exorcism, unction, the sign of the cross, and the white garment with which the baptized person was clothed as emblematical of his putting on Christ, and this garment was laid up in the Church as a witness against the candidate's apostacy. The Encyclopedia Britannica gives a minute account of these ancient and ostentatious ceremonies. It says (*Art Baptism.*) "After the questions and answers, followed exorcism; the manner and end of which was this: the minister laid his hand on the person's head and breathed in his face, implying thereby the driving away or expelling the devil from him, and preparing him for baptism, by which the good and holy spirit was to be conferred upon him. After exorcism followed baptism itself, and first the minister by prayer consecrated the water for that use. The waters being consecrated, the person was baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; by which dedication of him to the blessed Trinity, the person (says Clemens Alexandrinus), is delivered from the corrupt trinity, the devil, the world and the

flesh. In performing the ceremony of baptism, the usual custom (except in clinical cases, or where there was a scarcity of water) was to immerse and dip the whole body. And this practice of immersing the whole body was so general, that we find no exception made either in respect to the tenderness of infants or the bashfulness of the other sex, unless in cases of sickness and other disabilities. But to prevent any indecency, men and women were baptized apart. To which end, either the baptistries were divided into two apartments, one for the men and the other for the women, or the men were baptized at one time and the women at another. There was anciently an order of deaconesses, one part of whose business was to assist at the baptism of women. After immersion, followed the unction, by which (says St. Cyril) was signified that they were now cut off from the wild olive, and were ingrafted into Christ, the true olive tree. With this anointing was joined the sign of the cross, made upon the forehead of the baptized person, and the white robe was given him, to denote his being washed from the defilements of sin, and having put on Christ." Such were the superstitious inventions of men, with which immersion began its history. Where do we read of such show and paraphernalia in connection with the administration of the baptismal rite in the New Testament? Where do we find any account of

a baptistery in the days of the apostles, or of the first two centuries of the Christian era? Such an institution is the invention of the corrupt and superstitious days of the Church. The apostles baptized anywhere or at any time, by a river or in a desert, in the house of a Jew or Gentile, in a jail at the dead hour of midnight, or in the city full. Neither sickness nor sex, the tenderness of childhood or the feebleness of age, or the scarcity of water, presented any obstruction to the immediate administration of the rite. With them a dew-drop was as effectual as an ocean. Philip Shaff, in the first volume of his admirable Church history, says: "Water is absolutely necessary to baptism, as an appropriate symbol of the purifying and regenerating energy of the Holy Ghost; but whether the water be in a large quantity or small, cold or warm, fresh or salt, from river, cistern, or spring, is relatively immaterial." There are three things to be *noted* in connection with the introduction of the custom of immersion.

(a.) Men and women were immersed separately, and deaconesses were appointed to superintend the immersion of the women. Promiscuous immersion, like promiscuous dancing, are inventions of modern times.

(b) The baptism of infants was as common as that of adults.

(c) No one pretended that immersion was *the only*

Scriptural baptism. This was an error of later times, as we shall see. All unanimously admitted that sprinkling was of equal validity with an immersion, and immersion was only practiced when health and other circumstances justified it. As long as these three things were allowed, there was no conflict of opinion on this subject. A new and disturbing doctrine on the subject of baptism was first promulgated in the early part of the sixteenth century.

According to D'Aubigne's History of the Reformation, it originated in Germany, that hot-bed of almost every religious error of humanity. A few bold, restless, proselyting spirits came to Wittemberg and alarmed the whole city, and the Professors of the University, by their strange and un-Scriptural declarations. Even the sweet-spirited Melancthon was disquieted at the *new doctrine*, as he said, which they professed on the sacrament of baptism. They declared their purpose to form a church within the church, composed exclusively of true believers. They disdainfully rejected the baptism of infants, as of no more account than the sprinkling of a cat, though it had been the acknowledged practice of the Church for sixteen hundred years.

"A *new baptism*," says D'Aubigne, "was fixed upon as the means of gathering their congregations," and they proceeded to re-baptize all who followed their

way of error. Luther was summoned to the scene of intense and wild excitement. His coming was like the return of a bright morning after a dark and stormy night. He exposed the fallacy of their new-fangled doctrine, in eight logical and masterly sermons. Objections vanished, the tumult subsided, and the fanatical innovators were scattered abroad. Their error, however, which suddenly germinated and grew like rank vegetation, or noxious weeds in those "times of refreshing" could not be so suddenly extirpated, but, like a stone cast into the waters, has continued to spread, in ever-widening circles, to the present day. The Reformers, however, called a Council, and issued the following theses:

"Children born of faithful parents are the children of God, like those born under the Old Testament; and consequently they can receive baptism.

"The usage of baptizing anew cannot be proved, either by example or by passages, or by arguments drawn from the Scriptures; and those who submit to a new baptism crucify Jesus Christ."

In the early part of the seventeenth century, 1639, in Rhode Island, Ezekiel Holliman, a layman, immersed Roger Williams, and Mr. Williams turned around and immersed Ezekiel and ten others. Such was the origin of the rebaptizers, and of exclusive immersion in this country. From that time to this,

there has been a controversy on this subject in our land, and no doubt *will be* as long as this un-Scriptural dogma is maintained.

Allow me to say, "however, on the authority of the American Encyclopædia," that Roger Williams soon afterward confessed his error, declared the illegitimate and unauthorized character of the whole procedure, and withdrew from all fellowship with the rebaptizers. It is not possible, however, for even a great and good man to arrest by subsequent misgivings and efforts, the consequences of even a *single mis-step*, and the error that Williams confessed and deplored, has moved on like an evil genius, to mar and disfigure the work of Christ from that day till now.

The early and continued perversion of this simple rite may be mainly attributed to two causes: First, a disposition to ascribe peculiar and saving virtue to the observance of external forms. Indiaism and heathenism, Romanism and Protestantism, all bear mournful testimony to this propensity of human nature.

The second cause arises from a false and mistaken interpretation of two verses of Scripture. I refer to Rom., 6, 4, and Col., 12.

Perhaps no words of Scripture have been more frequently misquoted and misapplied than these two verses. They have been made to exert a bewitching and misleading influence upon many minds.

The passage in Romans is confessedly the most important. Let us examine it first. The design of the whole sixth chapter of Romans is to prove that the believer is *dead to sin*. Every allusion, argument and illustration, is designed to establish that *one* point. The apostle had been charged with preaching a Gospel that encouraged a continuance in sin. He refutes this slander with an emphatic denial, and declares the believer to be dead to sin. "God forbid; how shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" He then shows that the very fact of baptism obligated the Christian to a complete renunciation of sin. "Know yet not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? As Christ died for sin, so the believer is to be dead to sin. The apostle, then, emphasizes and intensifies the fact of the believer's death to sin in the fourth verse. "Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death (not into water); that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also being raised (not out of the water) but from a state of deadness in trespasses and sin, should walk in newness of life. A burial is mentioned for two purposes, (*a*) to intensify the fact of the believer's death to sin, (*b*) to furnish a proper antithesis to the resurrection "to newness of life" that follows. The believer's death, burial, and resurrection with Christ, are inner

facts of experience, moral and spiritual changes wrought by the Spirit of God, in the depths of the soul.

Moses Stuart says "that there is no more necessary reference here to the *modus* of baptism, than there is to the *modus* of the resurrection." The one may as well be maintained as the other." In Col. 2, 12, a similar burial and resurrection are mentioned, not to teach the mode of baptism, but to show the Christian's completeness in Him "who is the head of all," principality and power. "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, buried with Him in baptism." Now to be "circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, and to be buried with Christ in baptism," mean precisely the *same thing*, and express precisely the *same* part of experience. The apostle teaches that what circumcision was to the Old Testament Church, such is baptism to the New Testament Church, and both signify the "putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." The circumcision is spiritual, for "it is made without hands." The resurrection is spiritual, for it is "through the faith of the operation of God, and now what must the "burial with him in baptism be?" "I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say." It is a strong and bold expression to denote the Christian's complete union and identification with Christ.

Their baptism attested their divine renewal and consequent mystical identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. The most eminent points of Christ's history thus became spiritually incorporated into the sanctified characters and lives of these devoted Christians.

Besides all this, it not merely expresses an act of the past, but the permanent and abiding state of their souls. "Ye are *circumcised, buried, and risen with him*. To make it mean a literal burial under water, would be to keep the Christians at Colosse and at Rome a long time under water.

Mr. Wesley says, "such a figurative expression makes as much for sprinkling as for plunging; since, in burying, the body is not plunged through the substance of the earth, but rather, earth is poured or sprinkled upon it." Dr. Whedon says, "In Rome, whither Paul sent his epistle to the Romans, a handful of dust thrown upon a corpse was held to be legal ritual burial. The same custom prevails in this country. A handful of dirt is sprinkled three times upon the lowered casket, whilst the minister pronounces the words, "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." Christ's body, however, was never lowered under ground, but laid on a horizontal shelf in an excavated rock. And to suppose that our burial with him, spoken of in these verses, means an immer-

sion in water, is to make the apostles' inspired utterances *tame* and *meaningless*. The pouring of the alabaster box of ointment on the body of Christ represented his burial (Matt. 26. 13.) This pouring may prefigure a burial, but there is no fact in all the history of Christ's life or death that can be represented by an immersion.

Knowing, however, how slow people are to abandon a religious error, when once it has been embraced, I wish to make another point before closing this part of my subject. It is confidently asserted on the assumed authority of the two verses of Scripture in Rom. 6., and Col. 2. 12., that our baptism should symbolize the death, burial, and resurrection of our blessed Lord, and hence should be, by immersion under water. This is claimed to be its chief import. Perhaps no assumption has had a more fascinating influence over young minds than this. Were it not for the apparent seriousness with which this supposed symbolism is believed and taught, I would institute a somewhat incongruous comparison, and ask what resemblance can be imagined to exist between a gasping, dripping candidate, lifted by a puny arm of flesh, out of the water, and the mighty Jesus, bursting the bands of death, and coming forth from his rocky tomb, clothed with divine power and majesty. Can even the most poetical imagination discern even the remotest point

of resemblance between the "sorry sight" of the former and the glorious appearance of the latter. A resemblance might be traced, with as much propriety, between the golden calf of Aaron and "the image of the invisible God."

It is a law of all symbolism for the external to represent the internal, for the material to embody and adumbrate the spiritual. Now if the external form of baptism should symbolize a literal burial, then the external represents the *external*, the material symbolizes the material, and, according to this principle, the whole system of sacred symbolism becomes absurd and senseless. This is the great error of Romanism, when it claims that the bread and wine in the hand of the priest, represent the literal body and blood of the Lord Jesus. I would pause here, were it not for the importance which exclusive immersion assigns to this particular point. If baptism symbolizes a burial, or has anything to do with the death of Christ, what does the sacrament of the Lord's Supper indicate? All admit that the latter was instituted "to show the Lord's death till he come." (See 1 Cor., 11-26. The bread and wine symbolize the blessed fact that Christ "was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.")

If baptism symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, then the Lord's Supper is a *useless*

appendage of the Gospel, like the fifth wheel of a wagon.

No, my hearers, the blessed Lord never spoke an idle word or instituted a needless ceremony. He instituted two and *only* two plain and simple sacraments for two plain and significant purposes. The province of each is *marked* and *distinct*. There is no *confusion* or *jargon* between them. The one does not intrude upon the province of the other.

Water has been employed in all the ages and religions of the world as the symbol of cleansing and purity. Pilate washed his hands as an emblem of his assumed freedom "from the blood of that just person."

David says, "I will wash my hands in innocency, or as a symbol of my innocency." God says: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean."

Water has but one ceremonial signification in all the ritual of the Old Testament. Nowhere in the Bible is water, in any of its uses, emblematical of a burial. A grave is the place of loathsomeness, corruption, and decay.

"How frightful the grave ! how deserted and drear !
With the howls of the storm-wind, the creaks of the bier,
And the white bones all clattering together."

Can water, with its healthful, invigorating, purifying properties, symbolize the dreary regions of the dead? Water pertains to life, not to death. The water of baptism symbolizes, not the burial of the dead, but the

transformation of the living. "It is the outward sign of an inward grace." Away, then, with the far-fetched, unnatural, *unscriptural* idea of baptism as *figuring a burial*. It is the relic of a degenerate and superstitious age. It is contrary to Scripture and common sense. What is, then, the precise symbolical signification of water in the baptismal rite. The Scriptures, with one voice, proclaim it as the symbol of the awakening, regenerating, and purifying agency of the Holy Ghost.

John's baptism had no meaning, unless it typified the outpouring of the Spirit. "And as I began to speak," said Peter, "the Holy Ghost *fell* upon them as upon us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost."

The falling of the Spirit upon the household of Cornelius, reminded Peter of the falling of the water of John's baptism upon the penitent people, and of its symbolical signification. The fact and mode of the Spirit baptism, suggested to Peter's mind by a necessary law of the association of ideas, the *fact* and *mode* of John's baptism, and hence John's baptism must have been "by the descent of the element upon the person, and not of the person into the element." In accordance with this suggestion, Peter promptly in-

quired: "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"

In plain English etiquette, this question would be as follows: Will some one present be kind enough to fetch some water, that these may be baptized? This was a service which it was in the power of any one present to *grant* or *withhold*. A vessel of water was no doubt immediately brought in, and Cornelius and his household were baptized by affusion on the spot.

"We have here a principle of interpretation," says Dr. Whedon. "The symbol ought always to conform to and picture its original. Now, spirit baptism is the original of which water baptism is the symbol. If spirit baptism be by *affusion*, certainly water baptism must also be by *affusion*. Spiritual *affusion* cannot be symbolized by *immersion* in water. Hence immersion fundamentally fails to be a picture of the original. It is a symbol without a reality, a shadow without a substance. This unmeaning symbol, this imaginary shadow, *this exclusive immersion*, would scarcely deserve a serious thought, were it not for the results involved in it.

Every circumstance is to be measured by its consequences. It is believed that America was discovered centuries before Columbus kissed her virgin soil, but no results followed, and no new country was made

tributary to the wealth of Europe, and hence the discovery is accounted as nothing in history. The mere taking of the forbidden fruit by our first progenitor, would have been a slight and unnoticed act, had it not "brought death and all our woe" into the world. An immersion may be allowed as a harmless ceremony, when the temperature is favorable and all parties are agreed, but when it is practiced and *insisted upon* as the *sole* and *the only* mode of Scripture baptism, it is attended by consequences that are truly to be reprobated by every right-minded person. It, then, becomes a question, not as to the mode of performing a religious ceremony, but a question as to the *right* of the Church itself to *exist*. It becomes a question of *Church* or no *Church*. It affects the foundation principles of a true Protestantism and a pure Christianity. Every ordinance and institution, every rite and privilege of the visible kingdom of God, is involved in a Scriptural adjustment of this tiresome controversy. I charitably believe that few persons have any adequate conception of the deplorable consequences that inevitably follow their submission to exclusive immersion, any more than Adam had any thought of the dire results that would flow from his partaking of the interdicted fruit.

(a) The first logical consequence I shall mention is this: It necessarily produces a narrow and bigoted con-

ception of the Sacraments of the Church of God. The Church is the pillar of the truth, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. Its members are expected to exhibit supreme love to God and unselfish love to man. The very moment any man claims that the mere external attitude or mode of performing any religious duty or sacrament, is essential to its highest validity, he, at once, dwarfs the powers of his own being, "entangles himself in a yoke of bondage, and dishonors the God of the Bible. Whether a man sits, stands, kneels, or reclines, he may offer acceptable prayer to God. The outward attitude is regulated by custom and circumstances, "for the Lord looketh on the heart."

Sitting, standing, or kneeling, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper may be Scripturally celebrated. Why, then, should an individual or a Church ever insist upon a *particular* mode of administering baptism? Can the quantity of the water or the mode of its application, in the least affect the divine validity of the ordinance? God regards the state and temper of the soul, and not the posture and movement of the body, and to suppose that the great and holy God respects the mere outward mode of observing any sacrament is not only an outrage on common sense, but degrades God himself to the level of a *bigot*. Lutherans, Pres-

byterians and Methodists assume a different position, whilst partaking the elements of the Lord's Supper. Shall the Methodist, therefore, say to the Lutheran, you do not commune Scripturally because you do not kneel as the Methodist does? No more shall the Baptist say to the Presbyterian, you do not baptize Scripturally, because you do not *immerse* as the Baptist does. No ! let every individual and Church adopt and pursue its own mode of observing the Sacraments of God's house, and let not the one *unchurch*, "bite and devour the other" because of any diversity of opinion and practice in these indifferent matters. We look, with mingled feelings of pity and shame, upon the long and bitter controversy in the early Church, as to the *kind* of bread to be used in the Holy Supper. And yet it is just as reasonable to contend for a particular kind of bread as for a particular mode of baptism.

(b) An exclusive immersion inevitably leads to a useless and sacrilegious repetition of the holy ordinance of baptism. For wise and scriptural reason, God never designed that baptism, administered by a properly accredited minister of Christ, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, should ever be repeated. He that has been once baptized, has received the essence of the Sacrament and a thousand repetitions can neither add thereto or substract there-

from. Therefore, he who administers the ordinance the second time, is justly guilty of making common what God intended should be sacred. The marriage ceremony, once properly solemnized, is binding for life, and any repetition of it is vain and useless; so baptism, the outward sign and seal of our espousal to our heavenly Bridegroom, is obligatory for time and eternity, and any repetition of the ordinance is vain and blasphemous. Luther and the great Protestant Reformers assembled in Council, said: "Those who submit to a new baptism crucify Jesus Christ." "In my view," says Adam Clark, "it is an awful thing to *iterate* baptism when it had been before *essentially* performed; by '*essentially* performed' I mean, administered by sprinkling, washing, or plunging by or in *water*, in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit, being invoked at the time. Whoever has had this, has the *essence* of baptism, as far as that can be conferred by man; and it matters not at what period of his life he has had it, it is a substantial baptism, and the repetition of such a baptism I believe to be *profane*. It is totally contrary to the canon law; it is contrary to the decisions of the best divines; it is contrary to the practice of the purest ages of the Church of God; it is contrary to the New Testament, and tends to bring this sacred ordinance into disrepute." (See Acts 19, 5.) This great and learned commentator thus adduces six

reasons why baptism should never be repeated, and in the same connection, he challenges the world to produce "*one* instance of a person being rebaptized, who had before been baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity, or even in the name of Jesus alone. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, like the Passover, was to be "oft" observed in remembrance of Christ. The Sacrament of baptism, like circumcision, should never be repeated. When once administered, it *ceaseth forever*. This repetition of baptism is a *very serious* consequence of exclusive immersion, and I hope my hearers will take it to heart.

(c) A third consequence is, it necessarily develops an uncharitable and an unchristian view of the character and standing of sister churches. From such a standpoint, one is obliged to consider all other Churches as "thieves and robbers, climbing up some other way." Their members are enemies, heretics, and false brethren, avoiding the cross of Christ. The ministers of other Churches are "false shepherds, deceiving and being deceived." They are intruders into the sacred office, with no scripture authority, to solemnize matrimony, administer baptism, or consecrate the dying memorials of a Saviour's love. The sacraments they administer are an empty parade—a sublime and ridiculous *farce*. It is, indeed, shocking, to contemplate the many awful consequences to which

exclusive immersion leads. It would disintegrate and dismember every Church in Christendom, and plunge their millions of devoted communicants into its idolized vortex. As the Jews regarded themselves as the exclusive people of God and the favorites of heaven, so in the view of exclusive immersion, all other denominations of Christians, however devoted and "zealous of good works," are in the deplorable condition of unbaptized heathens, and can never attain to a Christian character and standing till they submit themselves to a regular system of plunging. The fraternization of other Churches is thus utterly incompatible with an adherence to this false and exclusive dogma.

(d) Again, exclusive immersion necessitates the imposition of a yoke upon the human family more galling and oppressive than the bloody rite of circumcision. The administration of the sacraments of the Lord, is to be co-extensive with the promulgation of the Gospel. According to Humboldt, eight millions of human beings inhabit polar and frozen regions. From six to ten months of the year, these latitudes are bound in "thick-ribbed ice." In the regions of the Esquimaux, lakes and rivers freeze to the bottom. In Greenland and Lapland, brandy and mercury congeal during their long and heartless winters. The populations crowd themselves together in small huts, and

use ice instead of glass for their windows. The air pierces and rends the lungs upon the least exposure. Unto "these must the Gospel be preached as well as unto us." Churches will yet arise in the very bosom of these inhospitable regions. The ordinances will there be administered as well as here. Circumcision might have been practiced amid these polar snows, but an immersion in water is utterly out of the question. Exclusive immersion, therefore, would bind a burden on the human race more cruel and unmerciful than the yoke which neither "the Jews nor their fathers were able to bear."

Equally superstitious is the idea that no harm can possibly result from the administration of exclusive immersion. The severity of the weather or the health and constitution of the minister or candidate are circumstances of no moment, compared with the special Providence that shall preside over the practice of this particular mode. Such reasoning reminds me of the language of Satan in Christ's temptation: "He shall give His angels charge concerning thee." Christ's reply at that time is applicable to the present case: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." There is no Providence that will arrest the consequences of any presumptuous act or rash exposure.

Instances not a few are on record, where the health of persons has been seriously impaired and their lives

abridged by this unnatural and unscriptural "bodily exercise," which "profiteth little." What Paul said to the jailor applies to all: "Do thyself no harm." Heaven's way has always been easy and simple; man's way is always hard and complicated.

Possibly some may regard an immersion under difficult and forbidding circumstances as a cross to be borne, and hence *insist upon it* as a test of piety. If such is the case, we do not hesitate to affirm that such a view of a cross is *akin* to the Papist's idea of penance, or the Brahmin's notion of self-torture—*ideas* that savor more of ignorance and superstition than of enlightened piety. Christ says, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." "His commandments are not grievous," and the ordinances of his worship adjust themselves, in their external application, to the necessities and diversified circumstances of man. This exclusive devotion to an external form, has always been a prolific source of trouble in the Church. It annoyed the apostle Paul more than any other circumstance in his ministry. He was everywhere pursued and *dogged* by the advocates of a Jewish exclusiveness, who endeavored to propagate, not a broad Bible Christianity, but a partial, *one-sided*, Judaistic Christianity, and their loud and constant demand was: "Except ye be circumcised, ye cannot be saved." As baptism now occupies the place of circumcision in the

Church, the kindred demand and *cry* of our day is, "except ye be immersed, ye cannot be saved," or have not received Christian baptism. With this false teaching, multitudes are now deceived and perverted, as they were in the days of the Apostle. Look at the Galatian churches converted and established in sound doctrine by the instrumentality of the apostle himself. Bigoted Jewish preachers entered and demanded submission to a certain external rite. In the absence of the Apostle the demand is yielded, the rite of circumcision is administered and the apostle Paul is regarded by his own children in the faith as their worst enemy. The perverted and misguided Galatians afterwards refused to fellowship their own father in the Gospel.

How often has this picture been verified in modern times. I can conceive of no form of teaching more *ungenerous* and *unscriptural* than an attempt, whether direct or indirect, to induce a person, old or young, to ignore and renounce the baptism conferred at the request of a sainted father and mother, and submit to the *fatal plunge* that shall forever debar from all communion "of the body and blood of Christ," with former beloved friends in the Lord. This is the *unkindest* cut of all, with which Christianity is *too often* stabbed.

Though those Judaizing preachers taught a great and fundamental error, we are not to regard them as

corrupt and ungodly men. No immorality is alleged against them. They were men of sober and grave habits, exemplary in life, and "exceedingly zealous for the traditions of their fathers." They belonged to "the sect of the Pharisees, which believed." Acts 15, 5. They believed in Christ, accepted and preached Christianity, but it was a Christianity fettered and clogged with the dead weight of circumcision. They made circumcision the door of admission to the rights and privileges of the Christian Church. They would rejoice over the conversion of the Pagans, but would compel them to pass under the yoke of circumcision, as a condition of Church membership. Their erroneous teaching, like the doctrine of exclusive immersion, always excited opposition and discord, wherever disseminated.

"Certain men which came down from Judea" taught this false doctrine in the Church at Antioch, and produced no little excitement and disturbance among the brethren. Paul and Barnabas promptly opposed their heresy, and "had no small dissension and disputation with them."

What a perfect parallel to this picture do we have in the modern advocates of exclusive immersion. They, like their predecessors, are many of them men of self-denial, devotion, and perseverance. They, too, are zealous for the propagation of Christianity at home

and abroad, but prescribe exclusive immersion as the condition of Church membership to all mankind. This is the great and egregious error, with which their whole system is saturated as with a poison, and to which they cling, like the early Jewish zealots, with the grip of death. It is the same error, only under a different name, which Paul and Barnabas publicly antagonized and exposed in the Jewish bigots at Antioch.

The error then, consisted in supplementing the Gospel with Moses and circumcision. The kindred error of the present day consists in supplementing Christianity with John the Baptist and exclusive immersion. Paul and Barnabas preached a free and unfettered Christianity, disburdened of every superstitious and superannuated encumbrance.

Their liberal terms of admission to the Church gave great offence to those intolerant sticklers for an external form, even as our free and evangelical terms of open communion greatly disgust the extreme immersionists. It is hardly possible for a comparison to be more complete in all its parts. May the Lord open the eyes of the modern contenders for exclusive immersion, and enable them to see their own likeness, in this particular, in the early and determined opponents of Paul and Barnabas.

I shall mention one more consequence, and then re-

lieve the already overtaxed patience of my hearers.

(e) The doctrine of exclusive immersion renders it utterly impracticable for Christians of all denominations to unite their prayers, sympathies and energies in one common effort for the conversion of souls to Christ. How often has the blessed promise of a gracious shower been entirely frustrated by more attention to the "letter that killeth, than to the Spirit that giveth life." The substance is swallowed up in the form, and the precious cause of Jesus is wounded in the house of his professed friends. Never can there be complete union of plan and action till "this that hindereth" is taken out of the way. The American Bible Society is established upon the broad, *evangelical principle* of a true Protestantism, regardless of denominational differences, and yet exclusive immersion opposes an *insuperable* barrier to a *complete* co-operation with its glorious and world-wide purposes, and work. It is a fence that God never reared, and which the Scriptures condemn—a partition wall that should be broken down. May it fall like the walls of Jericho, and I was about to say, may Joshua's malediction rest upon any attempt to rebuild it. It is a mighty obstruction to the Gospel car, an annoyance and vexation to the followers of Christ, and a stumbling-block to the world.

In Paul's great argument on the resurrection, he

shows that the incredible and impious consequences that necessarily follow the denial of the resurrection of the body, completely refute the assumption that there is no resurrection of the dead. So we say that even apart from the unscriptural character of exclusive immersion, these deplorable consequences, that necessarily grow out of it, are sufficient of themselves to condemn and forever brand the doctrine as a mischievous and dangerous heresy. There is scarcely an error or tradition of Romanism more obnoxious to the character of the Gospel than this dogma of exclusive immersion. It is a blotch, an unseemly excrescence on the outward form of Christianity—a needless and an offensive bone of contention among Protestant churches. It antagonizes the unity of the Spirit, and breaks asunder the bond of peace.

May the great Head of the Church descend in the *sifting power* of the blessed Spirit, and eradicate from every ecclesiastical communion, its inventions and traditions of men, that the pure gold of the glorious Gospel of the Son of God, may shine out in its native loveliness and divine power, and that Christians of every name may realize how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity, and the world be constrained to say, as it did in the days of primitive simplicity and fellowship, "Behold how these Christians love one another and are willing to die for one another."

"Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly." AMEN.

EXCLUSIVE IMMERSION:

ITS ERRORS

—AND—

Its Logical Consequences;

—BY—

REV. I. LINEBARGER, A. M.,

OF THE ROCK RIVER CONFERENCE.

Ye do Err, Not Knowing the Scriptures.—*Math. 22, 29.*

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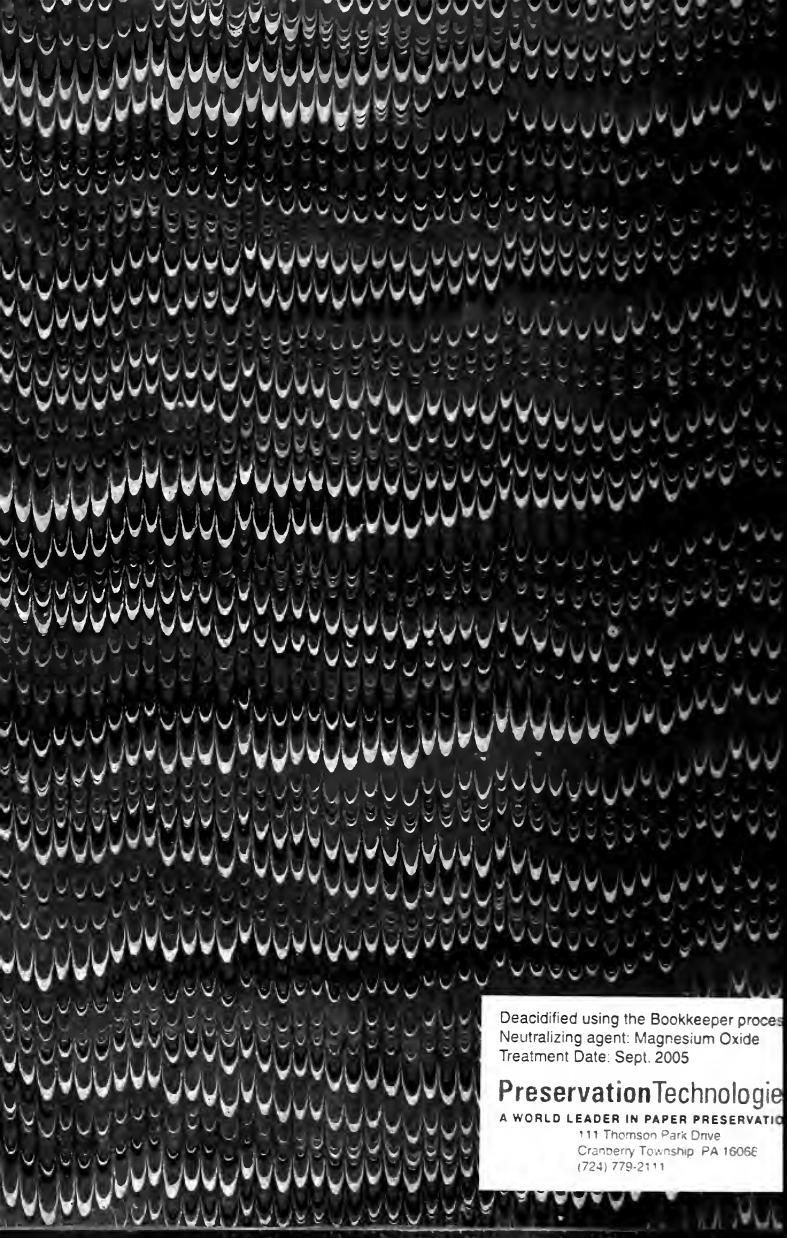








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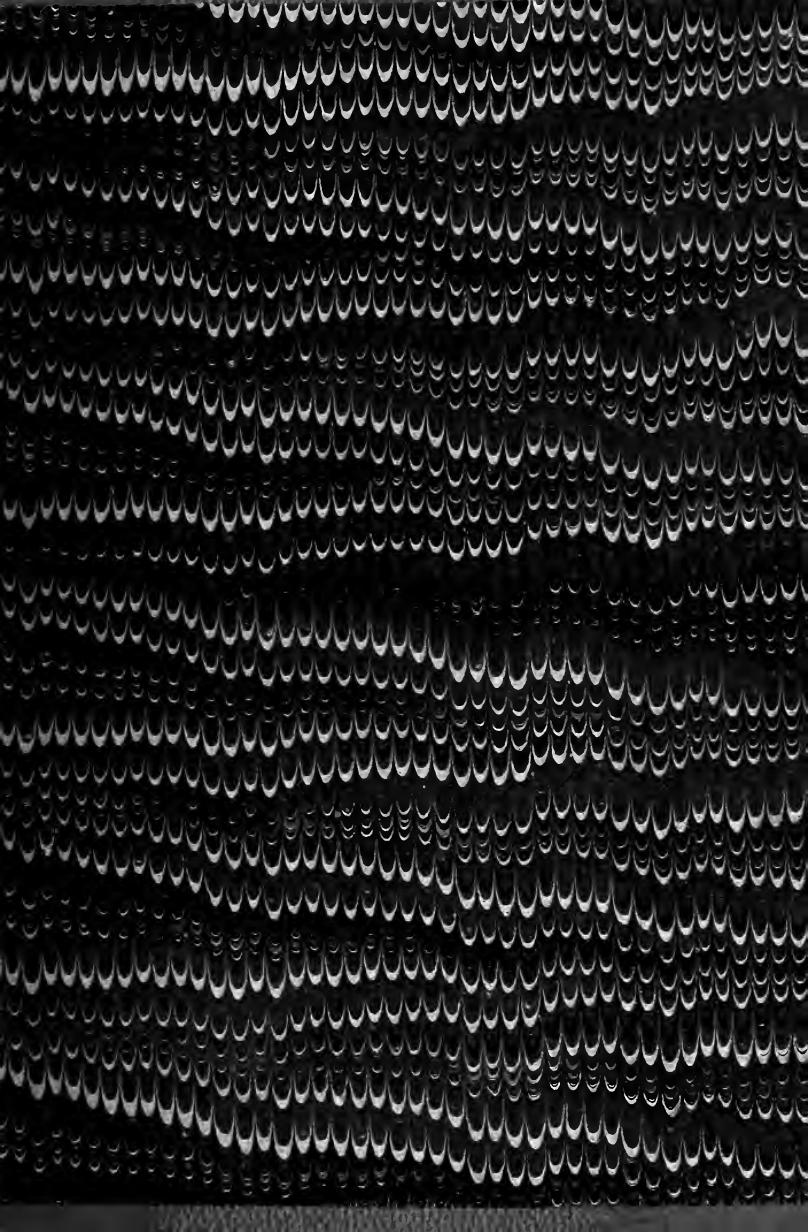


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